

WWRL Meeting Structure & Decision Making Agreement

(Approved by the Interim Board, July 4, 2006)

PROCESS:

Whole Systems Consensus Model: Includes Yea/Nay, Heart Agreement, Silent Attunement, and Conflict Evolution.

MEETING STRUCTURE

ROLES:

Facilitator

Scribe

Timekeeper

Eagle and Crow (energy watchers)

Talking Stick

DEFINITION OF ROLES:

FACILITATOR: Guides our gathering, maintains a neutral perspective by considering what serves the group's needs and outlines the procedures we agree to use in following the Whole Systems Consensus Model. Procedures may include reviewing the model roles. We may choose to enhance the facilitation of each meeting, identifying who is willing to serve in which Roles and for how long, identifying the issue(s) up for decision, and providing any pertinent information related to the issue(s).

SCRIBE: Serves as an impartial witness for the group and records the proceedings through note-taking. After Wisdom Councils the scribe prepares the minutes, sends a copy to the Board Secretary, and posts minutes to the community archives upon approval by the Board. Minutes are also taken at Board meetings, circulated and approved by the Board and posted to the community archives.

TIME KEEPER: This person tracks linear time and holds the time intention agreed upon at the beginning of discussion. This person keeps the group apprised of time and gives warnings when the time limit is nearing.

EAGLE: Serves an energy watcher who sees the overview and may call on us to expand our perspective or call on a higher wisdom. For example, she might ask us to reflect on how the discussion relates to our Principles, Vision, Purpose or Mission Statements. Or, she may ask us to pause in rational discussion and allow for mystery and spiritual guidance to refocus our decision-making efforts.

CROW watches group energy and caws when we get off track, when feelings need to be aired, or when we need to take a break. She has the groups' permission to ask those who have been quiet if they have something that needs to be heard or to ask those who have spoken frequently to listen and make space for more voices so decision-making can reflect all members present.

TALKING STICK: This object (which could be a stick, feather, shawl, or other article chosen by the Facilitator) is a visible symbol that reminds us to speak from the heart and listen with mindful awareness to whomever is speaking during discussion. The Talking Stick carries respect for free speech and assures that the speaker has the freedom and power to speak without fear of interruption, reprisal, or humiliation. Once an issue has been presented in full and the Facilitator opens discussion, the Facilitator or any other group member can call for the Talking Stick to be held out and offered for use by the group. Whoever wishes to speak takes it. The Talking Stick is passed, in this way, until all who wish to speak are done. Whoever holds the Talking Stick is asked to speak from their heart with courage, wisdom and truth. When all who wish to speak are done, the stick is passed back to the Facilitator.

MEETING PROCESS: Before beginning a Board or Council meeting, the Facilitator can call for Roles for the Whole Systems Consensus Model to be filled. For groups larger than 10 where the meeting will extend over 1/2 a day and multiple issues are on the agenda, roles may be designated in shifts. Prior to the meeting, a plan is agreed upon, outlining how the Roles will shift, who will serve in what capacity, and when the changes shall occur. Depending on the issue at hand, and the group size, the Facilitator may or may not initiate the Talking Stick. Any participating member of the meeting may request the Talking Stick at any point.

Once Roles have been filled, the Facilitator begins the meeting by offering an agenda and providing any pertinent information needed to begin. The group decides time limits for each item needing discussion and /or for the meeting. The Facilitator serves as a neutral/impartial participant until each member of the meeting has had an opportunity to speak to the issue at hand. The Facilitator may then step out of facilitation role to offer input. If more discussion is generated, the Facilitator resumes a neutral position to complete the process.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS: WHOLE SYSTEMS CONSENSUS MODEL

PRINCIPLES OF WHOLE SYSTEMS DECISION-MAKING: We embrace the following principles of Whole Systems Decision Making as outlined in *The Co-Creator's Handbook*, by Carolyn Anderson:

- Resting in a deep knowing that for every challenge there is at least one solution.
- Realizing that there is no need to convert, fix, or change anyone.
- Aligning in a collective agreement field of shared resonance.
- Honoring all perspectives by practicing deep listening.
- Releasing preconceived notions, and acknowledging that we are not in charge.
- Allowing decisions to emerge that are congruent with our inner knowing.
- Being actively engaged in the process and taking full responsibility and ownership for the decision.
- Decisions become a spiritual practice. Our greatest responsibility is to align with our destiny, tuning into the higher pattern of creation and bringing it into manifestation.

We are united in our commitment to take action that serves the well being of the whole, for future generations to come.

HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS: During meetings any member of the group can voice a proposal. When it is time to make a decision on a proposal the Facilitator may call for any of the following:

1. **Simple Yea/Nay agreement:** When only Yeas are heard, the proposal is approved. Any Nays result in further discussion, with the option of another call for Yea/Nay. Or, any group member may at that time call for a Heart Agreement Process
2. **Heart Agreement:** Guided by the Principles of Whole Systems Decision Making, we deepen our discussion until the Facilitator or any group member calls for consensus by an indication of Heart Agreement. If consensus is not reached by Heart Agreement, further discussion resumes until the Facilitator calls again for Heart Agreement. If no agreement is reached, the issue can be tabled until the next meeting (see Conflict Evolution and Mediation below), or, any group member may call for a Silent Attunement (see below) followed by another call for Heart Agreement. **Silent Attunement:** Discussion honors the rational mind, and clears any emotional issues or hidden agendas that stand in the way of clarity. Silent Attunement is the process we may use to gain further clarity and insight, in order to come to a decision that will serve the highest good of the whole. Any group member may call for Silent Attunement. When Silent Attunement is called for, we agree on a time limit and someone may be chosen to be a time keeper and guide us into a relaxed state. Then, through meditation we open to spirit and seek the compassionate understanding and inspiration that can move us into consensus and action. After meditation the scribe records our insights, and after any sharing and discussion a Heart Agreement can be called for.

HEART AGREEMENT MODEL

The Heart Agreement Model shall be used for any issues on which we need to reach consensus, other than those where it is deemed by the group that Simple Yea/Nay Agreement is appropriate. Hand over heart showing from 1 to 5 fingers indicates each individual's level of agreement with the proposal, within the following parameters:

5 Fingers = Agree wholeheartedly

4 Fingers = Agree

3 Fingers = Neutral or okay

2 Fingers = Disagree, but not enough to ask the group to hold

1 Finger = Wholeheartedly disagree and feel this does not serve the community's best interest.

For groups of 10 or less: we reach consensus when all member present at the meeting indicate '2' or higher. For groups of 11 or higher: we reach consensus when all members except for one indicate '2' or higher. It is understood that indications of '2' and '1' will

always generate a discussion process in order that all participants have equal voice and are heard.

In WWRL Heart Agreements, all names will be recorded in the minutes alongside heart finger counts when any members count is below 3.

CONFLICT EVOLUTION AND MEDIATION:

If a call for Heart Agreement has happened three times without consensus being reached, the issue can be deferred and revisited later in the meeting or tabled until the next meeting of the board or council. A motion to defer or table an issue shall be made by the Facilitator and confirmed by Yea/Nay or Heart Agreement. If an issue goes through two complete meetings without consensus by Heart Agreement and it appears there are no other options to be considered, then the Board or Council Chair will call for Conflict Evolution Council mediation and/or call for outside mediation or other help to resolve the impasse. The Conflict Evolution Council or outside mediator(s) will hear all concerns and facilitate the group coming to consensus. If consensus is not reached a decision will be rendered to either table the issue permanently or return the issue to the community at large for further information gathering and discussion with a timeline identified for when it will come to a meeting for Heart Agreement.